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THE NOTION OF Eternal Justification

REFUTED, IN A

FAMILIAR DIALOGUE,

IN WHICH THE

Figment of ETERNAL UNION is also confuted;

AND BOTH

Proved to be equally absurd and unscriptural.

He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. John iii. 18, 36.

If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Rom. viii. 9.

He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. 1 Cor. vi. 17.

Whom he called, them he also justified --- that is, as [illegible] UNITED to Christ by the HOLY SPIRIT and by [illegible] account of the merits of Christ imputed to them, [illegible] from the guilt of sin, and adjudged them to have [illegible] good things of Christ. WITS, *Oeconomy of the Covenants*, [illegible] page 526.

LONDON,

Printed, and Sold by E. and C. BILLY, in the *Poultry*; W. [illegible] on the North Side of St. *Paul's* Church-yard; M. [illegible] *Temple-Bar*; W. BROWN, the Corner of *Alder-Street*, [illegible] and E. LEGLEISLED, in *Nick-Street*, *Seven-Dials*. [illegible]

[illegible] Price Sixpence.

THE PREFACE.

IN almost every age of the Christian Church, either new errors have sprung up, or old ones have been revived: both which have also been defended and adhered to by some men, whose characters, learning, and judgments in other respects, gave reason to their cotemporary brethren in general, to expect better things from them. And the consideration thereof has always been matter of great concern and grief to those, that have been happily preserved from embracing those errors.

As in former ages, so also in this we live in, God has permitted the same things to happen: *unscriptural doctrines* and *pernicious errors* have been broached, and others have been revived amongst us; to the disturbance of the Church of Christ, and the corruption of many of her members. There is this difference indeed between the present and former ages: in those there seldom wanted a champion for the truth to step forth, from amongst the first class of men for abilities, learning and piety, in defence and vindication of those truths that were openly attacked. But in this our day, though we can boast of men of equal abilities, perhaps; yet those who are most capable, are, from a *false delicacy* of friendship, restrained from entering the lists against the defenders and propagators of those errors; because *such an one* is of that opinion; and lest *this* or *that* man should be offended at it. Others cry up peace! peace! and moderation! — "We do not want to set people

"together by the ears," they cry. And all the while the truths of God are suffering through their supineness; and the unwary people are carried away with the errors. What a pity it is! that the apostles had not had more of this *prudent moderation of spirit:* we should not then have read so much of their steady zeal; of one withstanding another to the face; and of their thundering out their anathemas against the propagators of false doctrines; nor of their advice to others to imitate them, in *contending earnestly for the faith, once delivered to the saints.*

In times of public calamity, as when a kingdom is invaded by an enemy, if the undisciplined and unskilled in arms should, as *volunteers*, take them up in defence of their sovereign and their country; it shews at least their affection for their prince; and the exigency of the times must plead an excuse for their conduct, I presume. So, when errors are pouring in like a flood in the Church, if one, unskilled in learning, and undisciplined in the sciences and rules of the schools, should step forth in a public manner, to encounter some formidable *giant-like* error, that seems to defy the truths of the living God—should his zeal and love for the truth be too rashly condemned, when operating in such a conduct? Though he may be accosted, as *David* was of old, by an envious, snarling brother, with, "I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart:" yet a stone from the sling of a stripling *may* be sent by an omnipotent arm, and be directed by an unerring aim, which may reach the head of the monster, and fell him to the ground.

The author of the following dialogue hopes he shall not be deemed too forward by the candid part of his readers and Christian brethren, for thus publickly opposing an error, which has gained some ground of late, and of which he has seen some pernicious

nicious tendency. Those who affect singularity, and love to walk in by-paths, instead of following the footsteps of the flock, will, no doubt, be offended with him. But though I would not willingly give any offence to Jew, Gentile, or the Church of God; yet I am not very solicitous about who may take offence at what I do, when I am conscious to myself, that I have no other aim or intention, than simply to defend the truth. And though I could say, this *great* man is my friend, and that *good* man is my friend; yet I trust I shall always be able to say at the same time, *sed magis amicus veritas.*

I SCRUPLE not to call the doctrine which I have opposed, a *bye-doctrine:* for such I presume it must ever be esteemed; when it is considered, that not one Protestant Church in Christendom ever did, or at present does, hold it in the confession of their faith: and when it is also called to mind, that that venerable assembly of divines, which met at *Westminster*, were unanimous (as far as I can learn) in their rejection of it; and in maintaining, on the contrary, that *the elect* ARE NOT JUSTIFIED, *until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.* Whose judgment in all doctrinal matters, I think all Protestants should be very cautious how they deviate from; seeing they were the greatest and most venerable assembly, for number, eminency in knowledge, learning and piety, that perhaps ever did, or ever will meet, since the apostles days: and that their confession of faith was the result of the most solemn prayer, and most mature deliberation and consultation.

As the word of God is the only standard of truth, and criterion to judge of any doctrine by; I have endeavoured to defend the truth, which is the subject of this dialogue, with weapons chiefly taken from that grand arsenal: not rejecting, much less despising,

ſpiſing, the judgment of thoſe great and holy men, who have borne their teſtimony to this truth; whoſe names, were they adduced, would fill a volume: while thoſe of any eminency, who have maintained the contrary opinion, have been as rare almoſt as a ſwallow in winter, or a woodcock in ſummer: notwithſtanding what a *modern* advocate * for this opinion hath ſaid to the contrary; whoſe liſt of the names of men of any eminency, that have ſeemed to favour the opinion, amounts to the prodigious number of *ſeven*. Some of which, *Witſius*, in particular, ſtrongly maintained the contrary opinion, when writing profeſſedly upon the ſubject. Yet it is acknowledged that he, as well as ſome of the reſt, uſed ſome expreſſions (incautiouſly, it is preſumed) which ſeemed to favour the opinion: which was ſufficient for them to be ſubpœna'd, to give in their evidence on that ſide.

I HAVE but one thing more to advertiſe the candid reader of: which is this, that the advocates for *eternal juſtification*, aware that their tenet is not defenſible from ſcripture, but only from metaphyſical reaſoning, and the logic of the ſchools, have invented a new phraſe; whereby they intimate, that all which God does to, or for, his elect in time, is no more than a *manifeſtation*, or *manifeſtative*, of what was *as actually* done from eternity: becauſe theſe gentlemen, who are got up into the clouds, cannot, by the dint of reaſon, diſcover how God can firſt *purpoſe* to do a thing, and then *execute* that purpoſe. But from that divinity which teaches us otherwiſe, whether we can comprehend the manner *how*, or not, mayeſt thou and I, reader, be for ever delivered.

* Dr. *Gill*.

THE Notion of Eternal Justification REFUTED, IN A FAMILIAR DIALOGUE.

Ortho.

HOW does my friend Cleon do? — I am heartily glad to see you.— I hope your family is well.

Cleon.

I am pretty well, through mercy, Ortho, I thank you: and my family are all well at present: though one or other of them is often ill.

Or. Afflictions and trials are necessary for us in this our pilgrimage-state. We cannot well do without them.— We should be apt to run away from God, and to take up this world for our rest, not considering it is polluted, if we had not some mementos of this kind, to remind us of the promised land that is before us, and of the inheritance reserved for us. And our gracious God has mercifully provided for our support during our journey. He has taken care to provide inns and resting-places upon the road for our accommodation; where wholsome food, refreshing wines, and reviving cordials, may be had gratis, even for calling for: so that we have none but ourselves to blame, if we are not in a proper condition to pursue our journey. It must be wholly owing to our neglecting to use what is wholsome, and to our hankering after what is pernicious.

Cl. You mean the ordinances, I suppose, where this ample provision is made for our wants, and where our souls may be supplied with every thing conducive to their health and safety? Indeed we have great reason to be thankful for the gospel, and the means of grace we enjoy so freely in this land. We have many excellent ministers amongst us: and the Lord hath been pleased of late to send out

ſome new ones, to proclaim the glad tidings of ſalvation; who are well qualified with gifts and graces for the work of the miniſtry.

Or. I rejoice to hear of any new miniſters of the goſpel being ſent forth, who are not only apparently taught by the Holy Spirit the truth as it is in Jeſus, but who have alſo courage to ſpeak out with boldneſs for their maſter. Such are much wanted at this day of degeneracy from the purity of goſpel-doctrines.

Cl. There is, no doubt, a great degeneracy from the doctrines of the reformation in this land in general; but notwithſtanding this, the goſpel ſtill ſhines forth, here and there, in its utmoſt purity and brightneſs. I really think, it has of late burſt forth with peculiar luſtre; and that ſome of the doctrines of the goſpel were never preached with greater clearneſs, or more explicitly, than at preſent. *New light* ſeems to be thrown upon ſome of them.

Or. I muſt confeſs I do not admire *novelty* in divinity, any more than I like to hear of old, long-exploded errors being revived in the church; which is too often the caſe. Sometimes a new edition of an *old error*, that has lain dormant for half a century, comes out with additions and improvements; ſanctified by the name of ſome great and learned man, who writes a preface, and notes explanatory to it: and ſo it paſſes for ſome time with the unwary for a *truth*, diſcovered with more than ordinary light.

Cl. There is the doctrine of Juſtification: I think that was never more clearly preached and explained than at preſent; it being quite upon the old, orthodox, calviniſtic plan, improved. Some of our ſound miniſters, at this day, ſpeak glorioufly of the *everlaſting love of God*; and treat of the *decrees* in their moſt abſolute, unlimited ſenſe; and prove how Juſtification took its riſe from thence.

Pray, what are your ſentiments concerning the doctrine of Juſtification? What think you of the matter, Ortho? For great and good men differ much about it, I think.

Or. Juſtification, according to the *article* of the church of England, is, "a being accounted righteous before God for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, by *faith* only."— This I take to be a good definition of Juſtification. And in the *homily* on Juſtification ſhe is ſtill more explicit; in which ſhe has theſe words: "There are

three things which muſt go together in our juſtification.—Upon God's part, his great mercy and grace; upon Chriſt's part, juſtice, that is, the ſatisfaction of God's juſtice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body, and ſhedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and throughly; and upon *our* part, *true* and *lively faith* in the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us."—In conſequence whereof, a ſoul, thus juſtified, has a right to all the good things of Chriſt, and to eternal life.

Cl. And how is this effected, or brought home and applied to the ſoul?

Or. By the agency of the all-ſufficient Spirit, in effectual calling; who, in a ſovereign way, quickens the ſoul, draws it to Chriſt, unites it to him, and gives it faith to receive him for wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and redemption. God the Father then views the ſoul as a real member in Chriſt's myſtical body; accounts it righteous through his righteouſneſs imputed to it; loves the perſon as his adopted ſon, and deals with him accordingly.

Cl. I obſerve, Ortho, you take it for granted then, that a man is juſtified when he believes only. There are ſome who think otherwiſe; and roundly aſſert too, that all who ſhall be finally ſaved, *were juſtified from eternity.*

Or. And I can as roundly aſſert, that a man is not juſtified till he believes: if that will be admitted as a ſufficient anſwer; and I am ſure I have the word of God on my ſide.

Cl. I have lately been in company with ſome of this opinion; and heard one ſay, That "if a man be-"lieves eternal election to be conſiſtent with himſelf, he "muſt believe eternal juſtification alſo." For those that God elected in Chriſt, he always looked upon as united to and in him: and, as he atoned for their ſins, they muſt have been juſtified with their head, when they were elected; for there never was a head without a body, *&c. &c.* ——

Or. Theſe, and an hundred abſurdities more, may ſpring from the ſame fruitful ſource; for they are all the production of man's prolific brain. When reaſon gets out of her proper ſphere of action, and, inſtead of being the handmaid of revelation, caſts off her authority, and wantonly aſſumes it to herſelf; and when pride, her paramour, is admitted to her embraces, the womb of imagination is im-

impregnated, and ſhe brings forth a numerous offſpring of illegitimate children: which, after dreſſing them in a ſcripture dreſs, ſhe calls *truths*, as they ſometimes have the appearance of ſuch; but which are, in reality, nothing but *errors*. Of which ſort, I think, the opinion of *eternal juſtification* is one.

Cl. But ſurely, Ortho, you muſt be ſenſible that this is not refuting the error, if it be one; but only declaiming againſt it: which conduct you would be apt to condemn in the oppoſite party.

Or. It was not for want of arguments or proofs on my ſide of the queſtion, that I did not at once produce them: but becauſe I thought it neceſſary to obſerve to you firſt, that this error proceeds, as I apprehend, from ſuffering reaſon to go beyond her proper bounds, and to determine in things which are above her comprehenſion, and which never can be brought down to it; and from not taking the plain declarations of ſcripture for a guide, abiding by them, and conſidering them ever according to the analogy of faith. Juſtification I take to be one of the deep things of God: and if all that reaſon ſuggeſts and determines in ſuch matters be admitted, then the word of God muſt be ſet aſide as an uſeleſs thing; yea, as ſpeaking nothing but untruths upon this head, and many others alſo.

I think the ground of this error, is, "not making a "neceſſary diſtinction between the purpoſes or decrees of "God, and the actual accompliſhment of them." As for inſtance: God, no doubt, from eternity decreed to create this world: Shall we therefore ſay, that it had an actual exiſtence from eternity?

Cl. I have lately read a tract upon this ſubject, in which the author makes a diſtinction between the *immanent* and *tranſient* acts of God. He ſays, God's decree to create the world, reſpected ſome *tranſient* act to be performed in time, as the accompliſhment of that decree: but that in the caſe of Juſtification, it is an *immanent* act only, and therefore eternal.

Or. This is ſaying without proof; yea, againſt proof of the contrary. For though the diſtinction betwixt the *immanent* and *tranſient* acts of God may have its uſe; yet, in this caſe, I apprehend, it makes not at all for that ſide of the queſtion: for ſurely the decree of juſtifying ſinners reſpects a tranſient act, as much as the decree of creating this world. For, does it not reſpect a change to be

wrought upon the soul at the same time, which is set forth to us in scripture under the very similitude of a creation? a new creation?

Cl. How can that be? when it is an act of God's mind only, and causes no alteration in the subject; "His decree to justify the elect, being their justification. For, "his decrees are acts; and his decree to elect sinners was "their election."

Or. I am of a very different opinion from you in this; and think it is absurd to say, that God's *purpose* or *decree* to do a thing, is the *doing* of it *. If his decrees are acts, they can be only acts of decreeing. As for election, I do not call it a decree: it was a perfect act, whereby he chose sinners; and his decrees concerning them respected the end to which they were chosen: and there required nothing more than the certain foreknowledge of their future being, in order to their election. But with respect to the point under consideration, God not only decreed to justify the elect, but actually fulfils that decree upon them personally; and their actual existence is absolutely necessary for that end. For no man is, or can be justified, who is not also quickened and regenerated †; he being justified only in con-

* A friend of mine has furnished me with the following anecdote, which I think is very apposite to the point in hand. Two gentlemen, who had been disputing about *eternal Justification*, took a walk in a garden belonging to one of them: when the other says to his friend, "You have a very fine tree here, Sir --- A tree! replies the other, it is not a tree, Sir, I insist upon it. It is a pump --- A pump! rejoins his friend: what do you mean? --- I say, it is a pump; for I have determined in my own mind to make it one, and have dug a well for it. Therefore I appeal to you, Sir, whether, upon your own principles, it be not a pump?"

† It is not intended here to confound Justification with Regeneration and Sanctification; or to imply, that the new nature, produced in regeneration, is that which constitutes a man a justified person; the matter or cause of his justification being *solely* the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith --- but only to maintain, that a justified person must be also regenerated, which in order of nature is done first; and in consequence thereof, he apprehends Christ's righteousness for his justification: and he is acquitted and justified in a law sense thereby; the sentence of the law being reversed, when by faith he is united to Christ, whose righteousness then becomes his, and he can plead it in court. In the same manner, as when an earthly prince issues a proclamation of pardon for rebels, who are condemned by the law of their country; until they plead it in court, and stand under the covert of it before the judge, they are not pardoned, but the sentence of

consequence of his standing under the covert of that righteousness, which is received by faith, and imputed to him: God then declaring him to be righteous in his sight, in consequence of his being made righteous; which is similar to God's pronouncing the works of creation to be very good, after he had made them so. And as great a change passes upon the soul of a man in regeneration, as passed upon the chaos, when God, in six successive days exertion of his creative power, brought forth the beauteous fabrick of the universe. Believers are said to be "created in Christ "Jesus *"— to be "begotten, and born again †"— and to be "new creatures ‡:" and the scriptures never speak of a man as justified, till this change be passed upon him ‖. How any one therefore can presume to say, the decree of justifying sinners respects not a *transient* act, to be performed upon the elect, personally, in time, I cannot conceive.

of the law stands out against them. But there is this difference indeed; God does not pardon and justify sinners without a righteousness answerable to the demands of the law; though an earthly prince does.

* Ephes. ii. 10. † 1 Pet. i. 3, 23. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.

‖ God is said to be the "justifier of the ungodly." From whence our sagacious opponents conclude, that the elect, while continuing ungodly, must be justified. When a king hath pardoned a criminal; do men say, he hath pardoned an innocent, a just, a guiltless person? Is it not usual, and equally right as usual, to say, the king hath pardoned a criminal or a malefactor? So when God justifies sinners, the ungodly; such they were till he took them in hand to justify them, but not afterwards: and called so, to intimate there was nothing in them which was the cause of their justification; the righteousness which justifies being wholly without them. But it may be asked, Do they not commit sin after they are justified? and are they not therefore still ungodly? I reply, they do: yet does not that denominate them ungodly persons. Paul, asserting the dignity and prerogative of his new nature, boldly declared, though he did sin, "It is no more I "that do it"--- I, Paul, the new creature in Christ Jesus --- "but "sin that dwelleth in me."

So when the scripture says, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth:" they strangely infer from hence, that all the elect, indiscriminately, are justified. But the context proves that those only, who are actually "justified by faith, "and have peace with God," in consequence thereof, are intended in this passage; as such only can make the challenges in this and the following passage, "Who shall separate *us?*" &c. *us, believers*; not *us*, the *elect* merely.

I ima-

I imagine, Cleon, you would be guided by the ſcriptures, and abide by their determination in this, as well as in all other points; rather than by the abſtruſe, metaphyſical reaſonings of men.

Cl. I would ſo; for following thoſe, I am ſure not to err.

Or. Well; tell me then, if you can, where the ſcriptures ever ſpeak of an unbeliever being juſtified? For if it were a truth, I ſhould expect to find ſome trace of it therein: but for my own part, I cannot find one text, which even implies ſuch a thing; but I find many which expreſly ſay the contrary. The ſcriptures ſpeak of men being by nature "children of wrath *; children of the devil †;" and the like: and that all unbelievers are under condemnation, and the curſe of the broken law: for it is an adjudged caſe in ſcripture, that "he that believeth not, is condemned already; and the wrath of God abideth on him ‡." They never ſpeak of believers as under condemnation, but always as juſtified: for, "he that believeth is juſtified *from all things* ‖." Faith §, or believing, there-

* Epheſ. ii. 3. † 1 John iii. 8.
‡ John iii. 18, 36. ‖ Acts xiii. 39.

§ It is an idle cavil of ſome, who ſay, "If we are juſtified by faith (inſtrumentally) then Chriſt juſtifies not alone; but we are juſtified *by works:* and ſo faith is made a co-partner with Chriſt, and exalted too high." --- To which I reply, the word of God ſays, Rom. iv. 16. "it is OF FAITH, that it might be BY GRACE:" and we make faith no more than a hand that receives the righteouſneſs of Chriſt *for* juſtification (which Dr. Gill himſelf allows). And can it with the leaſt colour of reaſon be ſaid to obſcure the glory of ſovereign grace, or to leſſen the freeneſs of a gift, to maintain, that what is freely beſtowed, muſt be received before it can be of any uſe to him to whom it is given? Then I will by the ſame rule maintain, that there cannot, in the very nature of the thing, be any ſuch thing as a free gift, which can poſſibly profit a perſon: for what can it avail, if it be not received? To term it a *juſtification by works*, becauſe faith is the creature's act, proves that men are led more by the ſound than the ſenſe of words: and they might with equal propriety object to juſtification by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, for the ſame reaſon, his righteouſneſs being an *aggregate* of works. Therefore, to give ſuch cavillers an anſwer once for all: we would have them to underſtand, that we place no more merit in faith, when we maintain, agreeably to the ſcriptures, "that a man is juſtified by faith;" than they do, when they ſay, we are *manifeſtatively* juſtified by it: but that we diſclaim it in any ſuch view or ſenſe, and even trample it under our feet. But yet, as it is the gift of God, enabling us to receive Chriſt and his righteouſneſs, to the end *that we might be juſtified*; we honour it, and eſteem it an invaluable

therefore, is the turning point between a ſtate of Condemnation and Juſtification. Chriſt is the door of entrance into a juſtified ſtate; God being "the *juſtifier* of him," and him *only*, "who *believeth* in Jeſus *." Therefore, while a perſon remains in unbelief, he abides under condemnation.

Cl. Yes; of its being manifeſted to a believer's conſcience: ſo it is by faith *manifeſtatively*, that a believer is juſtified.

Or. *Manifeſtatively* by faith! — Where did you learn this? — I deny not that by faith a believer comes to know that he is juſtified; but not that he was juſtified before faith: the ſame as a perſon knows he has a gift, when he has received it; not that he had it before he received it. For I ſhould ſuppoſe, were this the caſe, it being a matter of ſuch vaſt importance, that the ſcriptures would ſomewhere or other aſſert it in plain, explicit terms; and not the direct contrary only. And if the ſcriptures expreſly declare, that we are "juſtified by faith † ‡" — that "we are the children of God by faith in Chriſt "Jeſus ‖," &c. and no where ſay, that believers were juſtified before they had faith: then I think it deſtroys the plain, obvious meaning of ſcripture; overthrows the de-

valuable gift. Nor do we reckon it leſſens the freeneſs of a gift received by it, more than it would, if a perſon was to beſtow a gift on another, and, at the ſame time, give him a hand to receive it with. We therefore think it exalts faith no more to call it a *hand* to receive a gift with, than an *eye* to perceive, diſcern, or diſcover it: but that the former makes it rather more valuable; inaſmuch as, by receiving a gift, we thereby become poſſeſſed of it.

* Rom. iii. 26. † Gal. iii. 24.

‡ Our bleſſed Lord ſays, *John* iii. 14, 15. "As Moſes lifted up the "ſerpent in the wilderneſs, even ſo muſt the Son of Man be lifted up; "that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have ever-"laſting life." Here is a compariſon drawn betwixt the ſerpent, the type, and Chriſt, the antitype. The former was lifted up, that the ſerpent-ſtung Iſraelites, by looking up to it, might be healed: Chriſt was lifted up upon the croſs, and is ſtill held up in a preached goſpel, that all who are made ſenſible of their being bitten by the old ſerpent, may be healed by looking to, or believing in him. Here we may ſee the right uſe of faith, illuſtrated by the Iſraelites looking to the brazen ſerpent. Now, how abſurd would it be to ſuppoſe, that the Iſraelites, who were healed, by looking to the ſerpent, were as actually healed before they looked to it; and that, by ſo doing, they only had a *manifeſtation* of their cure?

‖ Gal. iii. 26.

clarations of God concerning his creatures; and makes the judgment of God to be *not* according to truth; to suppose it to be otherwise than as the word of God declares it is.

The scripture is not such a nose of wax; it has a fixed, determinate meaning: and what it says to any soul, whatever state it may be in, it must be a truth concerning that soul. If the word says to an unbeliever (whether elected or non-elected, for it alters not his present state) that he is in a state of condemnation; that must be true concerning such an one, as much as of one that shall continue to the end in unbelief. Otherwise the judgment of God would not be according to truth: or, which is equally dangerous to assert, God's word and his judgment would be contrary to one another: for I know of no other way of coming at the knowledge of the mind and will of God, than by the written word, opened by the Spirit.

The scriptures declare, that "God hath concluded all "under sin *;" which must be true of all mankind, and must have a reality in it. And the consequence of being concluded under sin, can be nothing less than being under condemnation; for, "judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation †:" and the sentence of condemnation must first take place upon every child of *Adam*, personally and actually, before justification can; which is a reversion of the former in order to the latter. For what need can there be of Justification, if a person be not *condemned?* and if he were justified *from* eternity, then he must have been condemned *before* eternity — Believe such absurdities, who will!

But I will adduce this one text more of our Lord's, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye "*may be* the children of light ‡." What will your friends say to this? Why, I know Dr. *Gill* says, "that ye may "*appear* to be the children of light," *&c.* What, then they actually were the children of light before they believed; yea, when in the darkness of sin, and blinded through unbelief? A fine conclusion truly! from the words of him, who spake as never man spake.

Again; pardon of sin is never spoken of in scripture as being before faith, but always after: and both it and justification are declared to be future, and consequent upon it, in order of nature, though not of time; as these scriptures

* Gal. iii. 12. † Rom. v. 18. ‡ John xii. 36.

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abundantly evince. " As by one man's disobedience many " *were* made sinners, so by the obedience of one *shall* many " be made righteous *." — " The scriptures *foreseeing* " that God *would* justify the heathen through faith †— that " we *might be* justified by faith ‡." — " We have believed " in Jesus Christ, that we *might be* justified ‖." — " By his " knowledge *shall* my righteous servant justify many §."— " That your sins *may be* blotted out **." — " Whosoever " believeth in him *shall* receive remission of sins ††." But how can sins be blotted out or remitted, if they are not previously charged upon the person?

Cl. But did not Christ become the surety of his people? did he not take upon him the sins of the elect, and atone for them? And if so, then were not they acquitted from guilt and condemnation, in consequence of his undertaking on their behalf? In the same manner, as *Adam* was the head and representative of all his posterity or seed; by whose sin they became sinners?

Or. The very manner in which you have worded this objection is sufficient, I should think, to refute the opinion it is meant to defend. *Adam*, you say, was the head and representative of all mankind, (the head and root ‡‡, I would rather say) and upon his transgression, the guilt of his offence was imputed to and entailed upon all his posterity; which is an indisputable truth. Every child of *Adam*, therefore, must be born a sinner, and under condemnation; *Adam* could not otherwise be the natural root, parent or representative of such an one: for though the guilt of his transgression was imputed to every one of his descendents, it could be imputed only *virtually* or *representatively*, till they

* Rom. v. 19. † Gal. iii. 8. ‡ Gal. iii. 24.
‖ Gal. ii. 16. § Isa. liii. 11. ** Acts iii. 19.
†† Acts x. 43.

‡‡ The reason why the word *root* (particularly when speaking of *Adam)* is preferred to *representative*, is, that the latter conveys an idea of a person's being sent back by one or more to present them: as in the case of a representative in parliament; which is not so in this case. *Adam* is more properly the *root* from which all the branches spring by natural generation, his posterity being all in his loins. In the case of Christ and his people, it is different: they are not his by natural generation, but are implanted or ingrafted into him *contrary to nature*. But as in a covenant sense, Christ and *Adam* may be said to be representatives; and as the word has been used by sound divines, for the want of one more expressive, it is used occasionally in this dialogue.

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were brought into being: then *actually*. Now view this ſtate of the caſe on the ſide of Chriſt. He is the head and ſurety of his people, by whoſe obedience and ſufferings alone they can be acquitted from guilt and condemnation. But when does this take place upon them? It could be only *meritoriouſly* (the virtue and merit reſiding in himſelf) till they become his ſeed: *actually*, when they are born from above of the Spirit, and his righteouſneſs is imputed to them; then, and not before, they are *perſonally* acquitted, pardoned, and juſtified. Then the decree of Juſtification is accompliſhed. For thus runs the divine procedure: "whom "he did *foreknow*, them he alſo did *predeſtinate*; and whom "he did predeſtinate, them he alſo *called*; and whom he "called, them he alſo *juſtified*; and whom he juſtified, "them he alſo *glorified* *." This is the ſtated rule and method of God's conduct in bringing a ſinner to glory; a retroſpective view of the different and ſucceſſive ſtates that he paſſed through, and of God's acts towards him. You ſee hereby that a perſon muſt be *called* before he can be *juſtified*. Whereas your opinion inverts God's order: thus you ſay, "Whom he juſtified, them he alſo called, and "whom he called, them he did predeſtinate," *&c.*

Cl. But this order is not always obſerved in ſcripture.—The words, *election*, *calling*, *juſtification*, and *ſanctification*, are often tranſpoſed; ſometimes one is firſt, ſometimes another: as in *Peter*'s Epiſtle, "Make your calling and election ſure †."

Or. If you obſerve the context, you will always ſee the reaſon for the alteration. *Peter* bids thoſe he wrote to, uſe diligence to make their *calling* ſure *firſt*, by which means alone they could attain to the knowledge of their *election*: not implying, that they were called before they were elected. And the ſame reaſons are equally obvious in other paſſages of ſcripture. But in the paſſage before-mentioned, the apoſtle begins at the fountain-head, the foreknowledge and predeſtination of God; and traces ſalvation along, through its progreſſive ſtages, till it ends in glory: which is an accurate account of the whole proceſs thereof.

Cl. But may not a perſon be condemned and juſtified at the ſame time? *condemned*, as he is the natural offſpring of *Adam*—*juſtified*, as he is in Chriſt?

* Rom. viii. 29, 30. † 2 Pet. i. 10.

Or. A person! you make me smile, Cleon. Consider, if you bring persons on the stage, your argument is lost, and mine is established. Remember you are dealing with non-entities, and what was actually done upon them before they existed. But if we suppose it relates to one in being, still this cannot be the case: for, "he that believeth is justified *from all things* *;" really and actually: not partly justified, and still partly condemned: being no longer under the *law*, as a covenant, which condemns all that are under it; but under *grace*, by which he is absolved from guilt and condemnation: there being "*no* condemnation to "them that are in Christ Jesus †." And *Paul* calls that soul, "an *adulteress* ‡," that is married to the two covenants, to the law and Christ too, at the same time. Whatsoever soul is lawfully married to Christ, by faith, must be freed from the power and dominion of her former husband, the *law*; otherwise, he says, she is not at liberty to marry him.

Nor can a man be considered as in *Adam* and Christ at one and the same time; for he must be taken off from the old stock, to be grafted into Christ, the true olive-tree. Neither was any believer in Christ before faith; except decretively, being in that sense chosen *in* him: otherwise *Paul* was egregiously mistaken, when he said, "Andronicus and "Junia were *in* Christ *before* him ‖:" and no less so, when he told the *Ephesians*, that before they believed, they "were "*without* Christ in the world §."

If a man be under condemnation in any sense of the word before faith; and if faith makes no alteration of his state before God; he must of necessity be under condemnation in the same sense after faith. But where do you find the scripture speak of any such thing of a believer? On the contrary, does not the scripture strongly contrast the two states of a person *before* and *after* faith? *Before* faith, he is "a child of wrath **"— he is "condemned already ††"— and "the wrath of God abideth on him ‡‡": *after* faith, he is "a child of God ‖‖"— "justified from all things §§" — "there is no condemnation to him ***"— and he "shall "not come into condemnation †††."

* Acts xiii. 39. † Rom. viii. 1. ‡ Rom. vii. 3.
‖ Rom. xvi. 7. § Ephes. ii. 12. ** Ephes. ii. 3.
†† John iii. 18. ‡‡ John iii. 36. ‖‖ Gal. iii. 26.
§§ Acts xiii. 39. *** Rom. viii. 1. ††† John v. 24.

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Cl. But you forget the *union* that has subsisted between Christ and his people *from eternity*; whereby they became interested in all that he engaged to do for them; so that the Father never looked upon or considered the elect any otherwise than as in Christ.

Or. It is an absurdity so gross, that language cannot furnish a proper epithet to express it; to suppose a *real union* with a *non-entity*: and the defenders of this notion have discovered great inattention to the point in debate, in explaining it by things that have a being; such as, a husband and wife, a vine and its branches, *&c.*

Cl. Take care, Ortho, how you deny an union with a non-entity, lest you thereby deny that our sins were laid upon Christ before we had a being: and so, farewel to all hopes of salvation.

Or. If your fancied *real union* (for that is the point in debate, not an union in *decree* or *purpose*) can be supported by no similitude more apt than that you have just mentioned; it must fall to the ground. For I apprehend that our sins might have been laid upon Christ before they were actually committed; or that God, from his foreknowledge thereof, might take an adequate satisfaction to his law and justice, without any real union between Christ and the elect: in the same manner as a person may make a provision for the payment of the debts of another, or engage to pay them, before they are contracted, or before the person has a being; knowing that he will be in such circumstances when born into the world, that he must of necessity contract such debts.

Cl. Then you deny also that the elect have any union with Christ after they are born, till they believe; do you not?

Or. I do *: except a decretive union, that is to take place in the fulness of time under the oeconomy of the Spirit.

* It is observable, that the similes made use of in scripture, to represent the union betwixt Christ and his people, are intended to give us different ideas thereof, as to the properties of it. The two kinds, which are most striking, are, a *husband* and *wife* --- and a *vine* and its *branches*, or a *head* and the *members*. The *former* is expressive of the union of mutual affection and interests --- the *latter*, of the inseparable union of their persons, and communion of life and grace. In neither of which is there the least foundation for supposing, that a rebellious sinner, who can have no affection for Christ, or regard for his interest, can be united to him: or that he, who is utterly destitute of all

rit. What sort of union had *Saul* with Christ, when he breathed out threatnings, slaughter and death, against his followers, and Jesus calls to him, "Why persecutest thou "me?" Will any dare to say, *Paul* was then in a state of union? With as much reason they may tell us, he was in a state of sweet communion and perfect amity. Was he one in Spirit with the Lord? Certainly not. Therefore he was not joined to the Lord: for "he that is joined to the Lord "is one Spirit *."

Again: Look at yonder libertine, whose supreme happiness it is, to indulge himself, without restraint, in the gratification of the lusts of the flesh, and to wallow in sin, like a swine in the mire. Suppose him to be an elect person. Is such an one united to Christ? an adopted child of God? pardoned and justified? — What then must we do with those scriptures †, which tell us, that "he that com-"mitteth sin is of the devil ‡" — that "as many as are "led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God ‖"— that "they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with "its affections and lusts §"— that "they that are *in* Christ "Jesus, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit **"— and that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is* "*none of his* ††." Has such an one the Spirit of Christ? — has he crucified the flesh? — is he led by the Spirit of God? — or does he walk after the Spirit? Can there be any union between such a vile, polluted creature, and a pure and holy God? "What communion hath light with "darkness? or what concord hath Christ with Belial ‡‡?" Will the putting in the word, *manifestatively*, be sufficient to abolish the meaning of those scriptures, which tell us so plainly, that such an one "is of the devil?"

all spiritual life, can, while continuing so, be in union with him, who is the fountain of life: "For he that hath the Son, hath life; "and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life," 1 *John* v. 12.

* 1 Cor. vi. 17.

† When a man has mounted the unmanageable fiery steed of *error*, and rushes into the field of controversy; he rides furiously on, trampling upon whole ranks and files of scripture-texts, without the least concern; and knows not where he shall stop.

‡ 1 John iii. 8. ‖ Rom. viii. 14. § Gal. v. 24.
** Rom. viii. 1. †† Rom. viii. 9. ‡‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

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Cl. It is certain, that persons who have not those marks have no reason to conclude that they belong to Christ, or are one with him: as "no man can call Jesus, Lord, but "by the Holy Ghost *."

Or. Yea, but they have all the reason in the world to conclude the contrary; if their judgment of themselves or others is to be determined by scripture. For, "if any man "have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" is a positive assertion, and a proposition which contains a plain truth: and, turn it which way you will, it is the same; and proves that person, be he who or what he will, to be none of Christ's †, who has not his Spirit. I would argue thus: "if any man," *&c.* but an unbeliever hath not the Spirit of Christ; therefore he is none of his. And the same conclusion may be drawn from all the other scriptures I have just mentioned.

When God justifies a person, he does it not only by an act of his mind, imputing the righteousness of Christ to him, and by his Word and Spirit declares him to be just and righteous in his sight; but he also makes him what he declares him to be. For, at the same time (as I before observed) he regenerates him, and a new and holy nature is given, a principle of divine life within is bestowed on him; so that he cannot sin (this new nature cannot) because he is born of God. This new and holy nature, "which is born of the Spirit, and is spiri-

* 1 Cor. xii. 3.

† "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and "her, beloved, which was not beloved," *Rom.* ix. 15. The apostle cites this passage from the prophet *Hosea*, where he seems to refer to the scattered and rejected Jews. But whatever its primary meaning may be, as no scripture is of any private interpretation, exclusively, the apostle here applies it to Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately; and produces it to prove, that they were *not* God's people, nor beloved of him, in a proper sense, till they were converted to the faith, and united to Christ, the *beloved One*. But it may be objected, that this refers to the Jews or Gentiles being brought into a visible church-state; nay, but *Peter* writes to the *strangers*, scattered throughout all countries, and yet applies the same passage to them; and adds, "which *had not* obtained mercy; but now *have* obtained mercy," 1 *Pet.* ii. 10. The passage does not run --- I will call them my people, which were not *called* my people; but which *were not* so before, in any sense, but decretively, or in purpose. When God calls a person by any name, he makes him what he calls him, if he were not so before. So when God says, he will call a person, his, and beloved; it is the same as saying, he will make him so.

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"tual *," and "finneth not †," is what denominates the man to be a new creature. Though the old nature remains in him, and he is still accountable for his actions, it is not allowed the honour of denominating the man, or of being any essential part of him. Old things being passed away, and all being become new; he is really a *new creature* in Christ Jesus, in whom he is created anew: is brought into a new state and relation to God, as well as possessed of a new nature. All this, I grant you, is the consequence of the decree of electing love. Therefore, in this respect, the judgment of God is according to truth: for whom he pronounceth to be righteous, he makes so, both by regeneration and imputation.

Cl. But may there not be an union where there is no communion?

Or. I think not ‡: but then the communion must be always agreeable to the *kind* of union. We all have union with God, as in him we live, and move, and have our being; and there is a communion of strength for that purpose. So, with Christ as God: for he "upholdeth all things by "the word of his power ‖;" and "by him all things con-"sist §." But you must certainly mean a special, real, and actual union with Christ, as the head of his church, who are his members. Now if the union you speak of be before conversion; what an union must that be, where the head is alive, and the members are all dead? For they are all by nature dead in trespasses and sins; federally dead, legally dead, and spiritually dead. What union is there between a living husband and a dead wife **? or between a living

* John iii. 6. † 1 John v. 18.

‡ Dr. *Gill* intimates, that a simple contact of two things, makes not an union of them: the pen, he says, that he holds in his hand, (when he is at any time writing any of his profound mysteries) is not in union with his hand. His meaning, I suppose, is, that to constitute an union, there must be an incorporation of one thing with another; and also a participation of nature. If this be the case, there must of necessity be the existence of both subjects, and a communication between them. From the doctor's own argument, therefore, I infer, that Christ can have no real union with a sinner, as a spiritual head; either before he exists, or while he is dead in trespasses and sins.

‖ Heb. i. 3. § Col. i. 17.

** Not to insist any longer on the absurdity of illustrating an union between a *being* and a *non-entity*, by two things or persons, which are both

a living tree and dead branches? The branches that are really grafted into Christ, the true olive-tree, the apostle tells us, "partake of the root and fatness thereof:" and that "if the root be holy, the branches are also holy *:" for "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit † ‡." The contrary of all which is evident of all the elect before conversion and faith; and needs no proof.

Cl. Don't you allow there is a *legal* union between Christ and his people? And if so, then what he has done and suffered on their account, or engaged to do for them, as the Father accepted it as done, must be accounted theirs, and as done by them, he being their surety: their sins therefore must be pardoned, and they must be justified and adopted in consequence thereof.

Or. But stop a little; your conclusion comes rather too soon: for let it be remembered, that *Adam* was their head and representative also; and that scripture, facts, and experience prove, that what he did in their stead is set down to their account first: they could not otherwise die, and be condemned in him. This, I think, may be somewhat illustrated by a familiar case. I say, somewhat illustrated by it, because no comparison or similitude can come up fully to spiritual things; there is such a depth in them.

Suppose a man was possessed of a great estate; and, by his luxury and extravagancy, was to spend it, and be re-

both in being: the idea of a man and wife will not afford the least assistance to our opponents, even supposing the person in being before conversion. For what kind of a marriage-contract, bond, or union, can there be between a man and woman without their mutual consent? The woman must yield her assent and consent to the union by marriage, previous to their being joined together by the consummation thereof. Christ, by the effectual working of his Spirit (as by proxy) wins the consent of the soul to give up herself to him in a marriage-bond or union, before he can be said to be actually married to her. Then he says, "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in "judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies," &c. It is a great mistake, I apprehend, of some men, who suppose that general declarations of God's love towards, and expressions of his delight in, his church, are equally applicable to all the elect, before and after conversion: for until they are converted, they are not properly either in, or of, the church; though appointed to be so.

* Rom. xi. 16, 17. † 1 Cor. vi. 17.

‡ Why does the apostle speak here of being joined to the Lord, if they were united before? So *Caiaphas* prophesied, *John* xi. 52. gather together *in* one.

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duced to poverty and misery: would not the posterity of such a man be all disinherited thereby, according to the law of this land; and this consistent with the greatest equity?

Cl. Most certainly they would.

Or. Well: suppose another, a very beneficent and opulent person, of his mere good pleasure, had purposed and voluntarily engaged himself to redeem this estate; to adopt some of the descendents of the spendthrift father for his own; and to put them in possession of it: but had fixed no time for doing the same for any one of them. Suppose that, after having made a contract for the estate, and secured it to himself, he at length paid the ransom of it; but still kept it in his own hands: that now he adopted one of them, and then another, and put them in possession, according to his own will and pleasure. Now in this case, could it be said, that the estate was actually theirs till they were adopted? for they had no legal title to it by birth; were not born heirs *. And would not the state of poverty, which their father had brought them into, be their first lot? So, I humbly conceive, it is with respect to Christ and his people: he takes them out of the state of guilt, condemnation, and misery, which *Adam* hath brought them into: and by uniting them to himself by his Spirit, and adopting them into the family of God; they thereby become legal heirs to, and possessors of, what he hath purchased for them. And he also impresses on them his own image, by which they are distinguished from the unadopted.

Cl. You must of course then deny the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect before they believe; since you deny their justification and union with Christ?

Or. Most certainly I do, because the scripture does, which is ever consistent with itself. When it speaks of

* It is a received opinion with some, that *faith gives not being to any thing that was not before.* As I chuse, rather than be led by the sound of such words, to appeal to the law and the testimony, and to weigh positions of this kind in the balance of the sanctuary, before I admit them as truths; I cannot so readily accede to the above position. For I find in scripture that faith (or God by, or through faith) gives being to union with Christ, justification, and adoption: a person becomes "a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" and "if "a child, then an heir of God through Christ;" as *Noah*, "by faith, "*became* heir of righteousness." *Heb.* xi. 7.

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the imputation of righteousness, it is always said to be by faith; yea, the righteousness of Christ is emphatically called, "the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH *"— "to whom it "*shall* be imputed, *if we believe* †"— "that righteous-"ness *might be* imputed ‡"— which is "unto all, and "upon all them *that believe* ‖." And "Christ is set forth "to be a propitiation," only, "through faith in his "blood §:" and without faith he is a propitiation to none. Now if it be certain and evident from the word of God, that righteousness is not actually imputed to a man before he believes; it is equally certain, that he cannot be justified before he believes; and consequently not united to Christ: for as the Spirit is the bond of union on Christ's side; so faith **, which is produced by the Spirit, is the uniting grace on the sinner's side, whereby he apprehends Christ, and his righteousness for justification; and by the means of which he is invested with a right to, and is made a partaker of those blessings, which are treasured up in Christ for his church.

With equal propriety, and much more reason, may it be said, that the elect were glorified from eternity; at least, that all who were upon the earth, or unborn when Christ

* Rom. iv. 13. † Rom. iv. 24. ‡ Rom. iv. 11.
‖ Rom. iii. 22. § Rom. iii. 25.

** Dr. *Gill*, with his usual importance, very gravely wonders, "how our divines should fix upon the grace of faith to be the bond "of union to Christ:" and peremptorily denies, that it is the Spirit on Christ's part. And what dost thou think, reader, is the bond of union on either Christ's or the sinner's side? The doctor shall tell thee —it is the *everlasting love of God* on Christ's side; and it is the *grace of love* in the creature on his side. Dost thou not wonder with me (for I must wonder sometimes as well as the doctor) that the everlasting love of God should be the bond of union to the elect, before that love reaches, influences, or operates upon them in any measure? and how an elect sinner, when his heart is full of enmity against God, should be united to Christ by the grace of love? for you are to remember that this union is as perfect before conversion (yea, from eternity) as after. The Spirit is cashiered from his office of producing this union: and as for faith, that cannot possibly be the bond, because it is the effect of union, the doctor says; and the second remove from a person's union to Christ. Strange! (I must wonder) that *faith cannot* be the bond of union, because it is the effect of union; and yet *love can*, which is the effect of faith: for I hope the doctor will not say, there is any love in the creature towards God before he has faith. So if faith be the *second* remove from union, love must be the *third*. Fine philosophical reasoning this!

ascended up to heaven, were: for the apostle says expressly, that "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit to-"gether in heavenly places in Christ Jesus *?" Now can any in their senses suppose the apostle's meaning to be, that they were really in heaven at that time? or in any other sense there, than virtually or representatively? For Christ being the representative of his people, in that sense they may be said to be raised up, and seated in glory with him: whose being so was an earnest and a pledge of their being the same in due time: but in no other sense, I presume, could it be said to be so.

Cl. Does not the scripture say, "because ye are sons, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your "hearts, crying, Abba, Father †?" Is not this a proof that they were sons before they believed, or were regenerated?

Or. Just as much as it proves that they were glorified before they were regenerated. If you consult the context, you will find that the apostle is there speaking of the different dispensations the church of God had been under. In its *infancy*, under the patriarchal dispensation: when it was nourished chiefly with the sincere milk of the promises.—In its *non-age*, or minor state, under the Mosaic dispensation; when it was instructed by the legal and typical services and ceremonies, being under tutors and governors.—And when arrived at *full age*, under the gospel-dispensation, called "the coming of faith ‡;" when the things before typified were clearly revealed and fulfilled: called also, for this reason I presume, the dispensation, or "mi-"nistration of the Spirit ‖." Now the apostle, addressing himself to those that were not only real believers and children, but who were also under this last dispensation, says, "because ye are sons," *&c.* They being adopted sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts. It is not said, because ye *were*, or, from eternity, *have been* sons; this would have been something to found such an opinion upon; but the apostle simply says, "because ye "are sons," by regeneration and adoption; therefore ye have the Spirit given you, as a witness and evidence thereof.

* Ephes. ii. 6. † Gal. iv. 6.
‡ Gal. iii. 25. ‖ 2 Cor. iii. 8.

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The scripture, in another place, says, "God hath predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ *." From whence I infer, that the word, *adoption*, implies they were not children before they were adopted; otherwise, what need could there have been of their being adopted. And the word, *predestinated*, proves that the thing could not have been done when it was predestinated: for if so, it would have been needless and absurd to *predestinate* or *fore-appoint* the doing of a thing, which was at the same time done. Such are the absurdities, which your strange notion produces!

Cl. Have you considered those scriptures, upon which the advocates for this opinion found it? such as, "I have "loved thee with an everlasting love †"— "Grace was "given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ‡"— and the like.

Or. I have considered them again and again; and rejoice in the glorious truths they hold forth to our view: but cannot discover any thing in them to found such an opinion upon. Of the eternity of God's love, thus God speaks to his living members of the Old-Testament-church, "I have "loved thee with an everlasting love:" and farther, it is added: *therefore I have justified thee from all eternity* — no such thing is either asserted or implied — but, "therefore "with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Of the nature of this drawing, see the sixth chapter of *John*, where our Saviour says, "No man can come to me, except the "Father, who hath sent me, draw him." What is he drawn to Christ for? but to believe on him, and thereby to be justified by him. But if justified from eternity, there can be no need of the drawing of everlasting love. So that our being elected in Christ — predestinated to the adoption of children — and grace being given us in Christ before the foundation of the world — are great and precious truths, as they discover to us the riches of God's grace, as well as the plan, which infinite wisdom had formed for our recovery from the state of misery, into which the Lord foresaw we should be plunged: and also, that provision which was made for us in Christ, in whom all blessings, gifts, and graces, were laid up as in a storehouse, to be dispensed according to his sovereign will and pleasure; and, in the ful-

* Ephes. i. 5. † Jer. xxxi. 3. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 9.

ness of time, to be brought home and applied to every object of his electing love. All in a way consistent with his perfections and attributes.—These are such invaluable truths, that I would not lose the comfort of them for ten thousand worlds. But I must still maintain, that these things do not at all prove the points under consideration, *viz.* that the elect were justified from eternity, or united to Christ.

Cl. But how can sinners be said to be elected *in* Christ, if they are not *in* him?

Or. By the decree or purpose of God, to bestow all grace upon the elect in and through Christ, they may be said to be chosen *in* him to that state of favour; he being the only appointed medium, through which God can look at sinners, any otherwise than in wrath and displeasure. And, when they are actually united to him, then they are made accepted *in* the beloved: then the eternal decree of justifying them is accomplished; and they are comely through his comeliness put upon them. But to say there is any real, actual union, between a holy God and a creature that is totally unholy, as all the elect are before regeneration, is little short of blasphemy. The divine nature of Christ was not united to the human, till the Most High had overshadowed the Virgin, and had separated, sanctified, and so *prepared a body* for him. So neither can any soul be united to Christ, till the same power of the Most High, either in or before uniting it to him, separate and sanctify the soul by regeneration.

Cl. What peculiar advantage then accrues from election to any soul before conversion?

Or. The whole of his salvation depends upon it, and is secured for him thereby in the everlasting covenant. He is as safe, with respect to his not falling into hell, before conversion as after. And hence God calls those things that are not, as though they were; because of their certain being or accomplishment in due time. Thus all the elect are chosen in Christ; and are *predestinated* to the adoption of children. They actually *become* the children of God by *faith* in Christ Jesus; and so *receive* the adoption of sons.

By the decree of salvation concerning any elect soul, the sword of justice is prevented from falling on him. Though he is born under the law, the curses of which stand out against him, and he is to all intents and purposes condemned by it, and liable to the punishment of it; yet the

execution

execution thereof shall never take place upon him. Suppose two men, who had committed a capital crime, were apprehended and cast into prison: and that the king, in whose dominions they were, upon the intercession of his son in behalf of one of them, should resolve to pardon him; provided justice could be preserved inviolate, and his laws should suffer no dishonour thereby; which the son undertakes to make all possible satisfaction to. The criminals are then tried in a court of judicature, are found guilty, and condemned; and the day is fixed for their execution. But before the day arrives, the king fulfils his purpose of grace towards one of them; makes known his resolution, and accordingly pardons him. Now as the king had determined to pardon him, he was as safe in reality, as though he had committed no crime which subjected him to punishment; and yet he was as really condemned, as if the king had not resolved to pardon him, or as if the sentence of the law had been actually executed upon him.

Cl. The apostle *Paul* tells us, "Christ hath made peace "by the blood of his cross *" — and that "when we "were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death "of his Son †." These scriptures seem to speak of peace and reconciliation being actually made between God and his people.

Or. They inform us, that what Christ engaged to do for those ends, he in the fulness of time accomplished.— He actually atoned for his peoples sins; satisfied divine justice, by drinking up the cup of wrath which they deserved; and so removed all things out of the way, that could possibly obstruct the actual reconciliation and peace of God with his people. So they were then virtually or meritoriously reconciled to God: the death of his Son, and the blood of his cross, being the particular things, which our faith should ever keep in view, when we look to Christ as our atonement and peace-maker. But this was not actually done from eternity, only decretively: and so "God calls those things that are not, as though "they were ‡;" for earth and hell cannot prevent their coming to pass in the appointed time. Thus Christ is

* Col. i. 20. † Rom. v. 10. ‡ Rom. iv. 17.

called

called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the "world *." If you would infer from these passages, that the elect were actually reconciled to God from eternity, it is more than they even hint at, as they confine it to the death of Christ: and the words following one of them, viz. *much more being reconciled*, plainly prove there was another, an actual reconciliation of the elect, personally, to follow the former, which was only meritorious.

Cl. Does it not imply a change in the mind of God, to suppose that he looks upon a soul as condemned to-day, and some time hence as justified?

Or. I cannot perceive the least change in the mind of God implied hereby. His secret purposes continue the same: he saves those, and only those, whom he determined to save. And he acts by an invariable rule, perfectly consistent with all his attributes, in the whole of his conduct towards mankind. He hates sin, and loves holiness; he is just, yet merciful. And he has fixed upon two establishments, or methods of acting, for manifesting this in his dealings with them. All that are under the first of these establishments, or covenants, are obnoxious to his holiness, condemned by his righteous law, and liable to the stroke of his avenging justice: and all such as are found under it, when he shall vindicate the honour of his law, he will assuredly punish for their iniquities. The other establishment, or covenant, is that of grace, as the former is of justice. In this he deals with sinners in mercy and love for his Son's sake. All, therefore, that are within the limits of it, that are brought into it by discriminating grace, are absolved from guilt and condemnation, and brought into a new state and relation to God; and he then can, consistently with the most pure and rigid of his attributes, manifest his love to them. So if this be any change in God, it is such as we ought to adore him for: since without *such* a change, no soul could ever have been saved.

Cl. Is not this making God such an one as ourselves, changeable in his love? For if he ever loves those he once hated, or hates those he once loved, he is changeable therein, I think.

* Rev. xiii. 8.

Or.

Or. God often changes in his conduct towards his creatures, but not in his purposes: he is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, with respect to his secret will and everlasting decrees; yet, before the full accomplishment of them takes place, a variety of events happen, which, to our short-sighted reason, seem full of contrarieties, and to imply a change in the first cause of them.

With regard to God's love or hatred of his creatures, I would ask those, who assert it destroys his immutability, to love those he once hated, or to hate those he once loved: Why did not God deal with fallen man, as with the fallen angels? banish him from his presence for ever, without the least hope of mercy given him, or the least provision made for his recovery? Why did God *love* the angels, while they continued pure and holy; and afterwards, when they had sinned against him, *hate* them? Why did God pronounce his creature, man, when he came out of his creating hands, to be *very good*, and manifest himself in him; and when he had transgressed, declare him to be *altogether evil*, and hide his face from him? — Would not a different conduct in God militate against his attributes? and be a putting darkness for light; and light for darkness? a calling evil, good; and good, evil? Notwithstanding this, "He is of one mind, and who can turn "him †?" yea, "with him is no variableness, nor sha-"dow of turning ‡," that is inconsistent with his purposes. Before the opposers of the truth which I contend for venture to say, it implies any change in the mind of God, which is any ways derogatory to his glory, to justify a sinner in time; let them answer the questions I have just mentioned, and prove that the known facts which they contain, do not imply the same.

* The angels that fell, and "that kept not their *first estate*," were *God's creatures*, and they were *holy creatures*: and what reason can be assigned, why God did not love them; which reason will not militate against his other attributes? And there is no doubt but they are *now* objects of his displeasure and vindictive wrath. Yet God never purposed to confirm them in the state, they were created in, as he did the elect angels, by an additional act of his grace and favour; but suffered them to fall; and, by falling, to become objects of his hatred; justice then taking place in their punishment.

† Job xxiii. 13. ‡ James i. 17.

God's purposes respecting every individual of the human race alter not. For "whom he foreknew, them he also "did predestinate," *before all time*: "whom he did pre-"destinate, them he also," *in time*, "calls: whom he "calls, them he also justifies: and whom he justifies, them "he also glorifies." God first *calls* a sinner, then he *justifies* him: which is "a translating him from the kingdom "of Satan into the kingdom of his own dear Son *;" wherein he justifies him, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. By which he makes both a *relative* and a *real* change pass upon him. By ingrafting him into Christ, a new relation commences; and by creating him anew in him, he is possessed of a new nature. He has a power given him to become a son of God by adoption: and being possessed of the life-giving Spirit, he is made a partaker of the divine nature. God the Father then looks upon him as in his Son; views him with complacency and delight †; manifests his love to him; and rests in his love towards him: which he could not do, while in his natural state, and under the first covenant.

Cl. But after all you have said, Ortho, there seems to me to be many difficulties in the matter; many things which I cannot easily get over or reconcile. Does not the scripture say, that "the Lord hath laid upon him the ini-"quities of us all ‡"— that "he hath made an end of "sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness ‖"— that "the Lord hath not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor per-

* Coloss. i. 13.

† I cannot but esteem it a most dangerous opinion, and that it borders upon blasphemy against God, being utterly destructive of his holiness, to hold, that God delighteth in his elect, while totally dead in trespasses and sins; they being, while in that state, nothing but a mass of corruption. To say that God considers them, and views them in Christ, does not mend the matter at all: for that is to suppose sin and corruption to be united to, and a part of Christ; for there is nothing in them before conversion which is not so. An union this with a living head, without any life being communicated. But when a soul is born from above, the case is different. The new nature of such an one is united to, and in Christ; and God can then, consistently with his purity and holiness, delight in such a soul. Yet, this does not militate against his love of pity and compassion towards them, while in their natural state; or his purposes of grace and mercy towards them, whereby they shall be *made* fit objects of his delight.

‡ Isa. liii. 6. ‖ Dan. ix. 24.

"verseness

"verſeneſs in Iſrael *?" How can theſe things be true, if the elect are ſtill chargeable with ſin, even before converſion?

Or. I think it very well correſponds with ſuch a doctrine. For when were theſe great tranſactions done, which you firſt mentioned? when were they really and actually accompliſhed? Not from eternity. Until Chriſt became incarnate, our iniquities were not actually laid upon him; and until he bowed his head, and gave up the ghoſt, he had not brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs. Chriſt himſelf therefore was not actually juſtified from eternity; nor until he roſe from the dead: that being his declarative juſtification; and a proof the debt was paid, meritoriouſly; the ſurety being ſet at liberty. I think it therefore the ſafeſt way, and moſt agreeable to ſcripture, to ſay, that the elect were *decretively* juſtified in the eternal council of peace — that they were *virtually* or *meritoriouſly* juſtified, when their ſurety hung upon the croſs — and that they are *actually* juſtified, when, by the effectual operation of the Spirit, they are enabled to believe in Chriſt, and are engrafted into him.

If the Father ſaved ſinners in conſequence of what Chriſt engaged to do for them before it was actually done: if he juſtified them before the price of their redemption was paid, and that righteouſneſs was wrought out for them, by which alone they could be juſtified; and this all upon truſt, as it were: why might not God, with equal propriety, receive ſatisfaction to his law and juſtice for the ſins of the elect, foreknown, that ſhould come after Chriſt; and that meritorious obedience to his laws, for, or on account of which he can juſtify them; without ſetting it down to their account, till he makes them actual partakers of the benefits thereof? For all theſe tranſactions that reſpected the redemption of the elect, being done by and between the perſons of the Trinity, without any concurrence or engagement of men, in that ſenſe they may be ſaid to be within God; he having reſerved to himſelf the whole diſpenſing of the grace, and being accountable to no creature. And the promiſes reſpecting the application of grace to the elect, being freely made, and made in Chriſt; none may dare to charge God with any injuſtice, if what Chriſt hath done

* Numb. xxiii. 21.

and suffered, designedly for them, be not set down to their account as soon as it is done: nor can many of the promises be fulfilled, until they are united to Christ, in a manner far different from what the designation or purpose of God had done it.

With respect to God's "not seeing iniquity in Jacob, "nor perverseness in Israel:" this cannot be taken *literally*; for they are declared to be a more stiff-necked people than any of the heathen nations around them. It must therefore signify God's people *spiritually*; those that were really in covenant with him, and typified by the outward covenant; and who were *Israelites* indeed: and so it signifies the true church of Christ, and every individual thereof, in all ages. In these God hath not, and does not see iniquity, so as to punish it with wrath. Yet many, yea all, at some time or other, incur his fatherly displeasure, for which he scourges them; but takes no *penal* satisfaction for their offences; *that* Christ both engaged to pay, and hath paid to the full, for them. So that from the beginning all true believers, such as were really born from above, and reconciled to God, have had no sin charged upon them, which could possibly subject them to wrath, from the time they became so.

As to the difficulties that attend this point of doctrine; we must not expect to see them wholly removed, while we have any darkness or imperfection upon our understandings: but should rather cry out with the apostle, from the consideration of what we do know of these mysteries, "O "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of "God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways "past finding out *!"

Cl. Depth of wisdom! indeed, Ortho; never to be fathomed by finite understandings, I imagine. Yet what is revealed is for us and for our children, to search into, in order to our attaining to that knowledge, which will make us wise unto salvation.

Or. Keep to the revealed word, and be not wise above, nor contrary to, what is written therein, and you will do right. Suffer it to speak its own meaning, and you will not greatly err †.

From

* Rom. xi. 33.

† There are no errors so gross, or contrary to the general tenor of scripture, but men may wrest some texts of it to the apparent coun-

From a general view of the scriptures upon the point in debate, some observations naturally occur, which greatly tend, in my opinion, to confirm the truth of what I contend for; namely, that a man is not justified till he believes.

Let us take a view of the dispensations of God towards his church. The covenant of grace was planned, settled, and ordered in all things, and made sure in the eternal Council before all worlds. When the appointed time came, man was created pure and perfect; but he soon fell from his perfection and purity, and became thereby obnoxious to the wrath of God. Now, though an ample provision was made for his recovery, yet God was pleased to suspend the actual manifestation of the glory of his grace, in sending his Son into the world, and punishing sin in him, who was the *second Adam*, for some thousands of years after: so that sin was not actually expiated till Christ suffered. This appears to be so contrived by infinite wisdom, to let man see what an obnoxious state he was in: and to convince him, that *Adam*'s state, as a public head, was first to take place; and after that, Christ's: and that man must first be condemned, in his own person, before he can be justified. For as *in Adam* all die, even so *in Christ shall* all be made alive. That which is *natural* comes first; and afterwards, that which is *spiritual*. And is not the same thing done, respecting all the elect? Are not all of them shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin? born children of wrath? at enmity with God? And are not they suffered to manifest it in their conduct, by continuing in sin; and that usually long enough to convince all around them whose offspring they are: before God pardons and justifies them through faith, and gives them a new nature, whereby to discover whose children they then are become by adoption and grace?

The dispensation of the gospel would cease to be what it really is, *viz.* a dispensation of grace and mercy to sinners,

countenancing of them; which, if considered in connection with the context, would be found to speak a very different language. And the strange method which some men take to prove their absurd notions from scripture, reminds me of one that I have heard of, who asserted he could prove from scripture, that men were commanded to hang themselves: for, says he, it is written, *Judas went and hanged himself*; and it is commanded, *Go and do thou likewise* --- Ergo.

if men by nature are not in that ſtate: for they are always addreſſed as ſuch; and the means of obtaining pardon, juſtification, and eternal life, are therein held forth to ſinners, as ſuch. And it ſuperſedes the uſe and neceſſity of ſuch means for obtaining thoſe ends, if the ends are already obtained: and it is charging God with folly and inſincerity, to ſuppoſe the means he has appointed, are not neceſſary to the obtaining the ends for which they are appointed. Upon this ſuppoſition, the offers and calls, invitations and promiſes of the goſpel, are the rankeſt diſſimulation that can be conceived. To what purpoſe are we told, that "Chriſt "is exalted to give remiſſion of ſins *;" if mens ſins were remitted before they had a being?

Cl. You are determined, I ſee, to ſtand it out with me, and to anſwer all my objections: but I do not know whether I ſhall give you the ſatisfaction of knowing you have made a convert of me to your opinion at this time, or not; for I muſt conſider the matter a little more maturely before I quite yield: perhaps I may then ſtrike ſail; or renew my attack, and throw a few more objections into your fort. But while I find the love of God to his people, called, in ſcripture, *an everlaſting love*; I know not how to give up the point.

Or. It is well for us that the love of God is everlaſting: it is from everlaſting to everlaſting. God is love, in the abſtract. It is his very nature: one of thoſe attributes, which are his very eſſence. God therefore loves by a neceſſity of his nature. Nor can he hate any thing that he hath made, till it be defiled with ſin, which robs not God of his love, but the creature of the benefit of it. But love in God I conſider as ſomething very different from that paſſion, which we call love in man. When man loves, he has a deſire after the object which his love is fixed upon, as ſomething that can add to his happineſs in the enjoyment of it. But God is eſſentially and eternally happy in himſelf, and needs not any addition to his happineſs; nor can any creature contribute towards it. God, by his love, makes his creatures happy, when it is let forth upon them; and nothing can obſtruct its acceſs to them but ſin. God's ſpecial love towards his elect, therefore, conſiſts particularly in this; *viz.* that he has purpoſed and engaged him-

* Acts v. 31.

ſelf,

ſelf, to remove whatſoever ſhould obſtruct the courſe of his love towards them *.

But I do not conceive it to be a neceſſary conſequence, that the love of God ſhould terminate on the objects of it immediately, ſo as to make them happy: his determination to make them ſo in his own appointed time, after they ſhould have paſſed through various ſtates and changes, being ſufficient to prove them objects of his *everlaſting love*. Neither is it neceſſary that they ſhould be united to Chriſt, or viewed as actually in him, to be thus the objects of his love; except in the ſenſe I before mentioned.

Cl. But God having elected ſinners in Chriſt, he muſt conſequently view them as in him, otherwiſe he cannot love them.

Or. Then you make the undertaking and ſuretyſhip of Chriſt to be the *cauſe* of the Father's love to them: I rather think, they are the *effects* of his love; and that the whole plan of man's redemption, together with all that Chriſt has done and ſuffered in the execution thereof, was in order to make a way for that love to flow down to the elect: love being the firſt impulſive cauſe. The

* I well know that the diſtinction, which has been uſed by ſound divines, betwixt a love of compaſſion and benevolence, and a love of complacence and delight, has been much ridiculed by thoſe who oppoſe Juſtification by faith: but with neither ſcripture nor reaſon on their ſide, it is preſumed; ſince God commands us to exerciſe a love of the ſame kind: and we are inſtructed to imitate him therein, and to approve ourſelves his children thereby. For thus our Lord himſelf enjoins us; "Love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do "good to them that hate you," &c. --- This cannot be a love of delight ſurely, that we are commanded to exerciſe: for ſuch a love towards the wicked is ſtrictly forbidden. Yet is it ſuch a love of benevolence as moves to acts of kindneſs and beneficence; to our wiſhing well, and doing well to them. And, to excite us hereunto, God's example is ſet before us, in his "cauſing his ſun to ſhine on the evil "and on the good; and his ſending rain on the juſt and on the un-"juſt:" *Matt.* v. 44, 45. And none, I ſuppoſe, will preſume to ſay, that God takes delight in the *non-elect* evil and unjuſt; whatever they may think he does of the others.

And is not the ſame kind of love frequently exerciſed amongſt men? a love of pity and benevolence, where there can be no delight? Inſtances of ſuch kind of love the reader will recollect, without my mentioning them. But then there is this difference between the love of God and man; that God can and does remove from the elect, whatever obſtructs his delight in them, in his own appointed time.

elect being in Christ therefore, in any sense, could not be the cause, but the effect, of the love of the ever-blessed God. Trinity.

If the case were really such as your opinion pleads for: if the elect be actually in Christ as soon as they are born, (to go no farther back); he being the object of his Father's love eminently, and the medium through which alone his love can flow to them: then they must have some experience of it in their souls, and it must terminate on them; for he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Nor would it be just * in the Father, I presume, towards his Son, to withhold all tokens and manifestations of his love from them, and to let them still remain in their state of sin and slavery; if what he hath done to redeem them from that state be actually imputed to them, and made theirs.

But if it be admitted (which I am persuaded is the real state of the case) that the elect, as soon as they are born, are in a state of guilt and condemnation, and that they are *in time* pardoned and justified; then it is not inconsistent with their being in a state of divine favour, for sin to remain in them, and that they feel many of the evils thereof. For as man, before conversion, receives many benefits and blessings of a temporal nature, which he is indebted to Christ for — so, if after conversion, he feels many of the temporal evils which sin hath brought upon him, till his salvation be compleated; it is only equivalent to what he had before: and this would not destroy at all the difference there is betwixt the two states, of Nature and Grace, of Condemnation and Justification.

Cl. But is it not difficult to defend the doctrines of Grace upon any other supposition, than that of *eternal justification*? Will not the Arminians and others overthrow all your arguments in defence of the doctrines of sovereign grace, if this be not admitted?

* I am bold to affirm farther, that it is impossible to reconcile it with the justice of God, that the elect should suffer any of the evils of sin, though but of a temporal nature; or that they should be visited with death, which is the wages of sin, if God had never charged sin upon them, nor viewed, or considered them any otherwise than as in Christ.

Or. I should be glad to know what advantage is gained by it, which is not already secured by the doctrine of Election. Every point that respects the doctrines of sovereign grace, is defensible upon the admission thereof; and all the absurdities, difficulties, and inconsistencies, which your notion necessarily involves its advocates in, are entirely avoided. Upon this footing, "every thing appears "beautiful," for it comes "in its season:" and the whole plan of salvation discovers infinite wisdom, with perfect harmony and consistency. God predestinates what he intends to do; appoints the means of performing the same; and in due time accomplishes his decrees. Every thing follows in due order, according to the appointment of God, and the nature of the thing. But, upon your hypothesis, there is neither first nor last; the means appointed are entirely superseded by the end's being already obtained; the promises of God are useless, unmeaning things; the work of the Spirit on the elect is superseded, and rendered needless: and the whole scheme of man's salvation is rendered a perfect jumble, and a heap of confusion.

Cl. You seem to triumph, Ortho, as if you had gained a compleat victory: but let me tell you, after all you have said, I cannot perceive so great a difference betwixt the two opinions, as you seem to think there is. Neither of them affects a man's salvation at all, or destroys the doctrines of free-grace. And if what I contend for be an error, it is a very harmless one, I conceive.

Or. I humbly conceive it to be an error of a very dangerous tendency: that it subverts the meaning of scripture — destroys the nature of faith — and opens a door to all licentiousness; it being the foundation and essence of the principles of Antinomianism; for it supersedes both faith and works.

Cl. Indeed! Ortho. If you could make this appear, I should immediately renounce the opinion with abhorrence, I think.

Or. I know not that I can make it appear to your satisfaction, although I am well convinced of it myself. However, I shall make some few remarks upon the subject, which I shall leave upon your mind, till I see you again; perhaps, in conjunction with what I have before advanced upon the subject, they may have the desired effect.

Cl. Well: do so. I shall be very ready to hear what you have to say farther: and I also promise you to weigh impartially all you have said, or shall say, upon the subject: as far, at least, as my memory shall assist therein.

Or. First then, I observe from what you have said, that you rest great weight upon the word, *manifestatively*; and seem to think, that all those passages of scripture, which speak of union with Christ, or justification, and the effects thereof in time, refer only to the manifestation thereof to the believer's conscience; and that, by adding this word to any of them, it is sufficient to turn the obvious sense and meaning thereof; and to prove, that by faith, a believer only *knows* that he *was justified before* *: though the word says, in the most express and absolute terms, that a man is *justified by faith*, and *not before* he believes. Now this cannot be the meaning of the Spirit in those scriptures, I am fully persuaded, for this reason: that some souls (not to say all believers for a time) are possessed of true justifying faith, to whose consciences *it is not* MANIFESTED, *that they are justified, or united to Christ*: but they remain in doubts and fears about it. Wherefore I conclude

* "For how, says Dr. *Gill*, should any one have a sense, perception, and comfort of their Justification by faith, if there was no justification before it?" I will take the liberty for once to attempt to answer the doctor's question: and I will do it as explicitly as I possibly can, lest the doctor should misunderstand me. I therefore reply, that a man knows, has a sense and perception of, his justification by faith, without its being before it; in the same manner, as the doctor himself would know, see, and feel that he had a purse of money in his hand, as soon as it was put there. And I suppose he needs not have it long in his hand (not the sixtieth part of a second), before he would have *some* sense of its being there; for with the same hand that he received it with, he would feel that he had it. So also in respect of union: A sense of union, and the union itself, might commence together, even from the instant of the contact. I presume, therefore, that it is not a necessary consequence, that we must be *conversant with a non-entity*, if we deny that Justification is before faith, or union with Christ before our having *any* sense of it: and, on the contrary, maintain, that they commence together, in the order of time; yet it is acknowledged, that, in the order of nature, a person must have a gift, before he has a sense of his being possessed of it. The sense of Justification, and union with Christ, may be very small at first; and to increase gradually, till it arrives to assurance; for, through ignorance, blindness, and the prevalence of unbelief, the soul may be in uncertainty about the matter, as above observed.

these passages must mean something more. To say, that the scripture, when it declares "we are the children of "God by faith in Christ Jesus," means no more, than that *we thereby know we are his children* — or that, "if any "man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," signifies only, that he who has not the Spirit of Christ, *has no reason to conclude that he is one of his* — and that, "we "are by nature children of wrath," implies only that we have wrathful passions and dispositions against God — and that "he who believeth not is condemned already, and the "wrath of God abideth on him," means, *as to his apprehension only:* this is absolutely false; for all unbelievers do not know, feel, nor are they at all apprehensive of their condemnation and wrath — This therefore is such a poor way of interpreting scripture, and offers such violence to the sense and meaning of words; that I think we might as well conclude it means any thing we please, or just nothing at all: since the plainest assertions are, by these means, to be understood, not as meaning truths in themselves, whether they are believed or not; but only, according as a person has such particular qualities about him, as to make them so. Thus I think this opinion *subverts the meaning of scripture.*

Again: when the Spirit of God begins to work savingly upon a sinner's soul, what is the first thing he convinces him of? Is it not of sin? That he is a sinner by nature and practice, and is therefore condemned by the righteous law of God? for the law curses every one that is such. Now would it not be blasphemy to suppose, that the Spirit convinces of, and testifies to a man's conscience, a *lye?* which must be the case, if he be not really in that state, and if it be not a truth concerning that man in particular, who is thus convinced. Our blessed Lord himself says, "He (the Spirit) shall convince the world of sin;" and assigns this reason for it, "because (he adds) they be-"lieve not on me * †:" intimating, that unbelief binds all

* John xvi. 8, 9.

† And *John*, in the third chapter of his gospel, *ver.* 18. establishes the same point; when he says, "he that believeth not is condemned "already, *because* he hath not believed," *&c.* Here the reason of a man's condemnation is declared to be, *because he hath not believed.* Now can that be said to be *the reason* why a man is condemned, if,

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all their sins and guilt upon them; which can be removed only by believing on him. Add to this; that the scripture every where speaks the same language upon the same point; namely, that all unbelievers are under the sentence of condemnation; and that none are justified, but by believing. But faith, according to your opinion, is a very different thing: for it requires not a man to believe in Christ, "unto righteousness;" or "that he *might be* justified;" but that *he was justified before he believed* *: which the scriptures, with one concurrent voice, deny. Wherefore I think this opinion *destroys the nature of faith.*

I would, lastly, caution you against this opinion, on account of the malignant influence it has had, and is very liable to have, on those that receive it, with respect to both their faith and practice. I am very sensible, that all the free-grace truths of the gospel have been, and may be abused by men of corrupt minds, and turned into licentiousness. But this opinion, I am persuaded, has a natural, and more direct tendency to promote an Antinomian spirit, and to lead to licentiousness, than any of them. I know many at this day, who talk of their *eternal union* with Christ, and of their being *eternally justified* in him; and so, satisfying themselves with this persuasion, they never seek to have that change pass upon their souls, without which they cannot have communion with God here,

notwithstanding that thing, which is said to be the reason of his condemnation, he may nevertheless be *not* condemned? What would men make of the scriptures of truth!

* In order to shew what the advocates for this opinion mean by Faith; and as a specimen of their excellent reasoning upon it, I must beg leave to present the reader with a passage from Dr. *Gill*'s *Sermons*, who is a favourite author of theirs: Vol. I. page 142, last edition --- "I ask you (says he) whether *in justification* a man must believe a "truth or a falsehood? You will say, he must believe a truth: then, "I say, it is a truth that he is justified before he *believes it*; he can-"not believe that which is not; and if he be not justified, that he "may *believe it*, then he believes that which is false." --- From hence it appears, that justifying faith has nothing to do with the object, Christ, or the word of God: but it wholly consists *in a man's believing that he is justified.* Dr. *Gill*, in a note in the following page, stumbles a little upon the truth, when he says; "faith at most "can only serve as a hand that receives the righteousness of Christ "*for* Justification, and claims an interest in it, and takes the comfort "of it." Here the good brother doctors seem unwittingly to disagree in their opinions.

nor

may enjoy him hereafter; and never desire any manifestations of the love of God to their souls; any fruits of the Spirit; or to be led by the Spirit. Christ, they say, has done every thing for them; atoned for their sins, repented, and believed for them, and performed all good works in their stead: and what he did is theirs, yea, whether they believe or not: for being eternally united to him, and justified in him, their state requires no alteration: and to endeavour after holiness, is only *polluting the altar*, and aiming to add something to the perfect, finished work of Jesus, which is already compleat — Thus they rant out their diabolical tenets, and blasphemous doctrines. And the conclusion is natural and easy: for if they suppose every thing to be done already; that they are actually united to Christ, and justified in him; and that their salvation is, on their parts, quite secure; what need can there be, of using diligence in the means, which God has appointed, for getting those things done? It is really opening a door to all manner of licentiousness, (and I should not wonder at seeing it flow in with a full tide amongst those that hold the opinion) to suppose a person, though elected, to be a real child of God, pardoned, justified, adopted, saved; while wallowing in sin and sensuality: and that there is no alteration of his state required, in order to his being brought to the full enjoyment of God in glory; only some *circumstances* or *accidents* of his state, that require any alteration. If this be not confounding things, which are in their nature diametrically opposite, and which God in his word has distinguished; and putting darkness for light, and light for darkness; calling evil, good, and good, evil; I know not what is.

Cl. But surely, Ortho, of those who are misled by this opinion, but few run such lengths as these in it; or make such horrid abuse of it: do they?

Or. Too many have, and do at this day; whose principles are entirely founded upon this notion of an actual, *eternal union* with Christ: and they are arrived at such a pitch of presumption, and licentiousness of manners, as to delude as much the appearance of holiness in their walk and conversation, as the real, well-informed disciple of Christ does the ways of sin. To call it an abuse of the opinion, is to acknowledge it, tacitly, to be a truth: but I rather think, it has its proper and natural influence upon such people. And if at any time we find it otherwise in those

those that hold it, it must be attributed to his faithfulness, and to the power of his grace, who hath said, "if his people drink (ignorantly) any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them *."

Wherefore, my friend, as I have your welfare much at heart, and desire nothing more, than to see you "walking in the truth," with the joy and comforts of the Holy Ghost; and that "you abide in the doctrine of Christ," which "is according to godliness" — seeing this opinion you have unwarily received, has been rejected by the most learned and orthodox divines in all ages †, who have had as good abilities and opportunities for examining the point, as any modern ones have — seeing also it is pregnant with the greatest absurdities, subversive of the meaning of Scripture, and injurious to the faith once delivered to the saints — and that it tends to establish a sort of principles, which, if they influence the conduct at all, must lead to a practice diametrically opposite to the spirit and genius of the gospel — For these reasons, I would caution you against this opinion, as a most *pernicious* and *dangerous error*.

* Mark xvi. 18.

† For I think I may challenge any one to prove, that any one of the fathers or the church of Christ, in or before the time required, in order to some alteration to the full enjoyment of God in glory; only some alteration or accident of his state, that require any alteration. If this be not confounding things, which are in their nature diametrically opposite, and which God in his word has distinguished; and putting darkness for light, and light for darkness; calling evil good, and good, evil; I know not what is.

2. No.

Q. Have [illegible], Otho, of those who are misled by this opinion, but few run down length as there is in it; or make such horrid shocks of it: do they?

THE END.

A. To [illegible] plain are [illegible] eternal [illegible] with Christ: and they are [illegible] as lack a [illegible] of predestination, and licentiousness of behaviour, as to darkle as much the appearance of holiness in their walk and conversation, as the real, well-informed disciple of Christ does the work of God. To call it an shock of the opinion, is to acknowledge it, in fact, to be a truth: but I rather think, it is the proper and natural influence upon [illegible] people. Also if at any time we find it odious in [illegible]